

Harbor Cleanup News New Bedford Harbor Superfund Site Summer 2008

Harbor PCB Dredging Enters Fifth Season

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This August the EPA will be starting the fifth round of full-scale dredging of the PCB-contaminated bottom sediment in New Bedford Harbor. Dredging this year will take place in the cove between Sawyer Street and Coffin Avenue in New Bedford and work is expected to last for approximately eight weeks. Similar to dredging results in recent years, EPA expects to remove about 25,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment from the harbor.

How does the dredging work? Where do the PCBs go?

(picture of the dredge) Dredging operations will take place from 7 am to 7pm Monday through Friday for approximately 40 days.

The dredged material from the harbor bottom is pumped directly into a floating pipeline that connects the dredge to EPA's de-sanding building located on the cove shore at Sawyer Street in New Bedford. At the de-sanding facility cleaner, coarse material is separated from the finer sediment that naturally has more PCB-contamination attached to it. The separated coarse material will be stored in a lined holding cell next to the de-sanding facility.

A submerged pipeline carries the finer, contaminated sediment 1.4 miles south to the dewatering facility located at Hervey Tichon Avenue and Herman Melville Boulevard in New Bedford. Inside the dewatering facility, specialized presses squeeze the excess water out of the dredged sediment before it is loaded and wrapped into covered train cars for offsite disposal. EPA anticipates that approximately 20 million gallons of water resulting from the dredging operations will be treated according to stringent, water quality standards before being released back into the harbor. About 16,000 tons of dredged and dewatered contaminated sediment will be transported to a licensed PCB landfill in Michigan.

What Progress has been made in the Harbor So Far?

- In 1994-1995, 5 acres of some of the harbor's most highly contaminated sediment were dredged in the vicinity of the vacant Aerovox mill.
- From 1999-2004, a wide variety of small scale cleanups in the upper and lower harbor were performed and the 5 acre dewatering facility was constructed.
- In 2002 – 2003, 7 acres of PCB-contaminated sediment and shoreline soils were excavated from residential properties and wetlands north of Wood Street. This area was replanted and restored to its native state. Annual sampling continues to show that the shoreline areas remain clean.(see photo)

- 19 acres of PCB-contaminated sediment were capped underwater just south of the hurricane barrier in 2005. This has been done in full cooperation with the City of New Bedford and the State of Massachusetts to ensure that it will not impede future navigational dredging needs.
- 2004-2007 – EPA dredged approximately 83,000 cy contaminated sediment from the harbor.
- June-July 2008 – Approximately 7,500 cubic yards of highly contaminated sediment was removed from the shoreline along the vacant Aerovox mill. This material has been stabilized with cement and is currently stored in a lined storage cell at EPA's Sawyer Street facility.

Will it be safe to play in the park alongside the cove during dredging?

Absolutely. The EPA has conducted thousands of air samples before, during and after the dredging operations and there is no risk to the public that will be using the park. As a precautionary measure, air monitoring will be performed to cover all four wind directions from the dredge, as well as on the dredge itself, and the results will be posted on the project web site (www.epa.gov/ne/nbh).

Some Site History and Where are We Today? (Kim this can be a smaller section in different font color or something to save space)

The New Bedford Harbor Superfund Site is an 18,000 acre urban estuary that stretches from the upper Acushnet River into Buzzards Bay. As a result of industrial activity that took place in New Bedford, the Harbor's sediment is highly contaminated with PCBs – an industrial lubricant and di-electric fluid that was banned from production by the EPA in 1978. In 1983 the EPA added the Harbor to its National Priorities List under the Superfund program. This allowed the site to be eligible for federal cleanup funds.

Since 1983, the EPA has allocated over \$250 million towards the planning, sampling, engineering and construction costs that are involved in the cleanup process. Roughly 880,000 cubic yards of contaminated harbor sediment require cleanup; approximately 118,000 cy have been remediated to date. With our current cleanup approach and funding level, EPA will potentially be working to clean the harbor for another 38 years. In light of this timeframe EPA has begun evaluating other cleanup alternatives for this site. We will keep you informed as we move through this evaluation process.

Looking Ahead and Your Involvement

EPA continually needs your help as the communities which share New Bedford Harbor and the abutting Buzzards Bay move closer to having a clean Harbor once again. We plan to hold public informational meetings every three to six months to provide updates on the Harbor cleanup and on potential changes or alternatives to the remedy as we continually work for a safe and efficient cleanup strategy. The next meeting is planned for the October/November 2008 timeframe, at which point EPA will have concluded the fifth dredging season, and there is likely to be more information on our evaluation of potential future modifications or alternatives.

* EPA also hosts an informal walk-in meeting at 10 AM during the last Thursday of every month, at our Sawyer Street trailer.

**For more information please visit our project website at: www.epa.gov/ne/nbh
Or contact us:**

Toll Free 1-888-372-7341

U.S. EPA Project Managers

Dave Dickerson, ext 8-1329 dickerson.dave@epa.gov

Elaine Stanley, ext 8- 1332 stanley.elaineT@epa.gov

U.S. EPA Community Involvement

Jeanethe Falvey, ext 8– 1020 falvey.jeanethe@epa.gov

MassDEP

Joe Coyne, 617-348-4066

Joseph.coyne@state.ma.us

While seafood is part of a healthy diet; fish, quahogs and lobsters from the Acushnet River and New Bedford Harbor contain high levels of PCBs. Illness and harm to your health could result if eaten regularly, especially to pregnant women and those of childbearing age. Please take caution and notice of the restrictions on fishing and lobstering that have been in place since 1979.